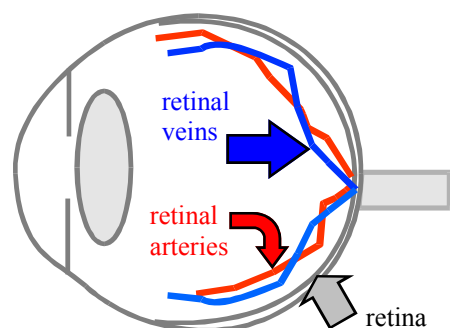


# Terms used to describe a retinal vein occlusion

**Retina:** is the thin film that lines the back of the eye, similar to the film of a camera. Light (things that you see) enters in through the front of the eye and falls on the retina. The retina turns the light into electrical signals that are sent to the brain, allowing you to see.

**Retinal veins:** are the small 'pipes' in the retina that drain blood out of the retina, back to the heart.

**Retinal arteries:** are the small pipes that deliver the blood (from the heart) to the retina.



A 'cut through' diagram of an eye (looking from the side)

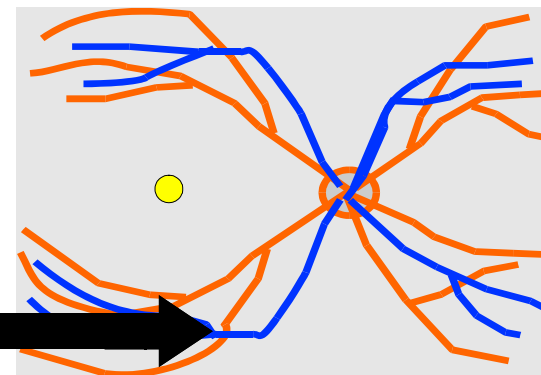
## What is a retinal vein occlusion?

A vein blocks when the blood in it stops flowing, and it cannot then drain the blood out of the retina. Some blood then leaks out of the vein. In addition, clear fluid leaks out of the blood 'water-logging' the retina, damaging your sight.

## The causes, and what you can do

Observations suggest that blood flowing through the vein may be blocked by something pressing on the vein. For example, any condition, such as high blood pressure, that makes the small arteries 'hard', may cause the artery to press on the vein and block it.

The distance between the arteries and veins varies in different people, which may be one reason why some people are more likely to develop a blocked vein than others.



A view of the retina from the front: what the doctor sees looking into your eye. The arrow points to an artery—vein crossing point, where the vein may be blocked



### High blood pressure

Controlling the blood pressure to below 140/80 helps to prevent the arteries getting 'harder', and can prevent a blocked vein in the other eye.



### A healthy diet

A healthy diet helps. The Department of Health recommends:

- five portions of vegetables or fruit every day
- 30 minutes exercise a day (eg walking, swimming)
- small amounts only of animal fat (meat, dairy food)
- salt: too much may contribute to

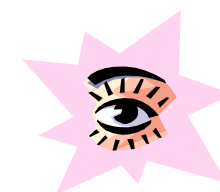
### Alcohol

The recommended maximum is 3 (male) 2 (female) units a day. A unit is 1/2 pint or a tot of spirits. Less is best if your blood pressure is high.



### Smoking

The more you smoke, the more damage is done (such as hardened arteries). Try to stop: ask your GP if you need help.



### Glaucoma, diabetes, and other conditions

Other conditions may also cause a blockage of a retinal vein, and extra treatment may be needed.



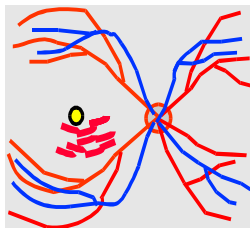
### Aspirin

Aspirin may help to prevent further blockages. Ask your GP (usual dose 75mg/day).

## Types of retinal vein occlusion

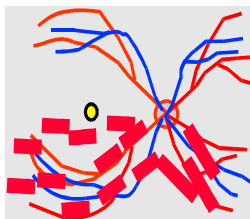
### A small 'branch' retinal vein occlusion

The centre of the retina is responsible for your sharp vision, such as seeing people's faces or watching television. If this central part of the retina (a tiny yellow spot in these diagrams) becomes 'waterlogged' by leakage from the blocked vein, your sight will be reduced. After approximately 3 months, if the waterlogging remains, laser treatment may help to seal any leaks.



### A more severe 'branch' retinal vein occlusion

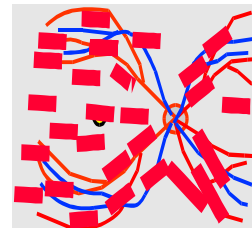
Inevitably the central part of the retina is affected, reducing your sight, and laser is often needed. Laser treatment may be needed to reduce waterlogging, stabilising the sight.



*How to cope with poor vision in one eye: ask your eye clinic doctor.*

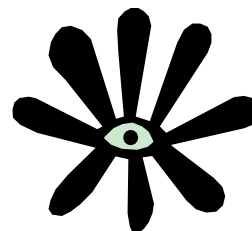
### A central retinal vein occlusion

Unfortunately, your sight is usually affected in this type of blockage. (Although a very mild blockage may not affect your sight.) Laser treatment does not improve the sight, but it may be necessary to prevent complications: tiny blood vessels can grow where they should not, leading to bleeding later. If the blockage is severe, a lot of laser is needed to prevent severe glaucoma.

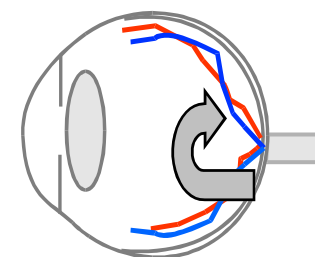


### What is laser?

'Laser' is a very bright, but very narrow, beam of light. You need to sit in a machine like the one used to examine your eye, and the light is shone in through a small contact lens. If your condition is mild, the laser treatment does not usually hurt.



# Retinal Vein Occlusion



**A blockage of a small vein in the retina, the 'film' lining the back of the eye.**

*This leaflet explains:*

- *the terms the doctor uses in the outpatient clinic*
- *what a retinal vein occlusion is*
- *the causes*
- *what you can do to help yourself*
- *the types of blockage, how your sight is damaged, and laser treatment*

This leaflet is designed to be photocopied in black and white. Print out page one and two in colour. For outpatient use is easier to photocopy than print out double sided copies. Photocopy page one, and two, as 'double sided'. The leaflet can then be folded as shown and is easy to read and display. Make sure one of the pages is not upside down...this may require experimenting how pages feed into the photocopier.

